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AN

ORATION

DELIVERED

MARCH FIFTH, 1776.

RPJCB

AN

ORATION

DELIVERED AT *WATERTOWN*,

MARCH 5, 1776.

TO COMMEMORATE

THE BLOODY MASSACRE AT *BOSTON*:

PERPETRATED MARCH 5, 1770.

BY

PETER THACHER, A. M.

Asellum in prato timidus pascebat senex
Is, hostium clamore subito territus,
Suadebat asino fugere, ne possent capi.
At ille lentus: quæso, num binas mihi,
Clitellas impositurum victorem putas?
Senex negavit. Ergo quid refert mea,
Cui serviam? Clitellas dum portem meas. *PHÆDRUS.*

WATERTOWN:
Printed and Sold by BENJAMIN EDES, on the Bridge,
M, DCC, LXXVI.

At a Meeting of the Freeholders and other Inhabitants of the Town of BOSTON, *legally assembled at* Watertown, MARCH 5th, 1776.

VOTED, That the Thanks of the Inhabitants of the Town of *Boston*, be given to the Rev. Mr. *PETER THACHER*, for his *elegant* and *spirited* ORATION, now delivered at their Request, in Commemoration of the horrid MASSACRE perpetrated on the Evening of the 5th of *March*, 1770, by a Party of Soldiers of the XXIXth Regiment, under the Command of Capt. Thomas Preston.

Voted, That a Committee be appointed to wait upon the Rev. Mr. *Thacher*, with the above Vote, and desire a Copy of the ORATION for the Press. Attest. *WILLIAM COOPER*, Town-Clerk.

RPJCB

GENTLEMEN,

A Sincere Desire to shew my Respect to the truly worthy Inhabitants of the Town of BOSTON, alone induced me to deliver the following ORATION; the same Motive influences me in consenting to its Publication.

I am,
Gentlemen,
With the utmost Respect,
Your most obedient humble Servant,

PETER THACHER.

AN

Waterto n Free Public Library

ORATION.

MY FRIENDS,

WHEN the ambition of Princes induces them to break over the ſacred barriers of ſocial compact, and to violate thoſe rights, which it is their duty to defend, they will leave no methods uneſſayed to bring the people to acquieſce in their unjuſtifiable encroachments.

IN this cauſe, the pens of venal authors have, in every age, been drawn: With Machiavelian ſubtilty, they have laboured to perſwade mankind, that their public happineſs conſiſted in being ſubject to uncontrouled power; that they were incapable of judging concerning the myſteries of government; and that it was their intereſt to deliver their eſtates, their liberties, and their lives, into the hands of an abſolute Monarch.

MITER'D hypocrites, and cringing, baſe-ſouled Prieſts, have impiouſly dared to inliſt the oracles of GOD into the ſervice of deſpotiſm; to aſſert, that, by the command of the ſupreme lawgiver, we are bound to ſurrender our rights into the hands of the firſt bold Tyrant, who dares to ſeize them; and that when ſo ſeized, it is rebellion againſt God, and treaſon againſt the Prince, for us to attempt to reſume them.

DEPRAVED as is the human underſtanding, it hath yet ſtrength enough to diſcern the ridiculous falacy of theſe aſſertions: The votaries of ignorance and ſuperſtition may indeed be impoſed upon by them: When we place unlimited confidence in our civil or ſpiritual fathers, we can ſwallow, with eaſe, the moſt improbable dogmas; but there are feelings in the human heart, which compel men to recognize their own rights, to venerate the majeſty of the people, and to deſpiſe the inſult which is offered to their underſtandings, by theſe doating abſurdities. Had princes no other methods to accompliſh their purpoſes, could they not eſtabliſh their uſurpation, without convincing mens judgments of their utility, they would be more harmleſs to mankind than they have ever yet been? They might be ſurrounded with the faſcinating gewgaws of regal pomp; a few paraſites might bow the knee before theſe idols o their own creating; the weak and the wicked might obey their mandates; but the baneful influence which they now have upon the intereſts of individuals, and of ſociety, would come to a period: they would not revel in the ſpoils of nations, nor trample upon the ruins of public Liberty.

CONSCIOUS of this, they have uſed arguments, and purſued methods, entirely different from theſe, to effect their deſigns; inſtead of convincing the underſtandings, they have addreſſed themſelves to the paſſions of men: The acts of bribery and corruption have been tried with a fatal ſucceſs: Men, *We* know, have ſold their children, their country, and their GOD, for a ſmall quantity of painted dirt, *which will periſh with the uſing.*

EXTENSIVE as are the revenues of princes, they are ſtill inadequate to the purpoſe of bribing large communities to ſubmit to their pleaſure; corrupting therefore a few, they have overawed the reſt; from ſmall beginnings, and under ſpecious pretences, they will raiſe a ſtanding military force, the moſt ſucceſsfull engine ever yet weilded by the hand of lawleſs domination.

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WITH such a force, it is easy for an ambitious prince, possessed by nature of very slender abilities, to subvert every principle of liberty in the constitution of his government, and to render his people the most abject of slaves; if any individual feels the injury done to his country, and wishes to restore it to a state of happiness, with a bayonet at his breast, a dragoon will compel him to silence: If the people, awakened to see their interest and their duty, assemble for the same purpose, a military force is at hand to subdue them, and by leaden arguments, to convince them of their error.

AN easy task would it be to enlarge upon the fatal consequences of keeping up such a standing army in time of peace, and of quartering a lawless body of men, who despise the just restraints of civil authority, in free and populous cities: That no vestige of freedom can remain in a state where such a force exists; that the morals of the people will be gradually corrupted; that they will contract such an habit of tame submission, as to become an easy prey to the brutal tyrant who rules them; hath been heretofore largely and plainly demonstrated, by persons so much more capable of doing it, than he who is speaking, that it would be presumption in him to attempt it now.

THERE is no need of recurring to the ancient histories of Greece and Rome, for instances of these truths. The British nation, once famous for its attachment to freedom, and enthusiastically jealous of its rights, is now become a great tame beast, which fetches and carries for any minister who pleases to employ it.

ENGLISHMEN have been wont to boast of the excellence of their constitution; to boast that it contained whatever was excellent, in every form of government,

government, hitherto, by the wit of man deviſed; in their King, whoſe power was limited, they have aſſerted that they enjoyed the advantages of Monarchy, without fear of its evils: While their houſe of Commons, choſen by the ſuffrages of the people, and dependant upon them, repreſented a republic; their houſe of peers, forming a balance of power between the king and the people, gave them the benefit of an ariſtocracy. In theory, the Britiſh conſtitution is, on many accounts, excellent; but when we obſerve it reduced to practice, when we obſerve the Britiſh government, as it has been, for a long courſe of years, adminiſtered, we muſt be convinced that its boaſted advantages are not real: The management of the public revenue, the appointment of civil and military officers, are veſted in the king: Improving the advantages which theſe powers give him, he hath found means to corrupt the other branches of the legiſlature: Britons pleaſe themſelves with the thought of being free; their tyrant ſuffers them to enjoy the ſhadow, whilſt he himſelf graſps the ſubſtance of power. Impoſſible would it have been for the kings of England to have acquired ſuch an exorbitant power, had they not had a ſtanding army under their command: With the officers of this army they have bribed men to ſacrifice the rights of their country: Having artfully got their arms out of the hands of the people, with their mercenary forces, they have awed them into ſubmiſſion. When they have appeared, at any time, diſpoſed to aſſert their freedom, theſe troops have been ready to obey the mandates of their ſovereign, to imbrue their hands in the blood of their brethren.

HAVING found the efficacy of this method to quell a ſpirit of liberty in the people of Great-Britain, the *righteous* adminiſtration of the *righteous* king, George the third, determined to try the experiment upon the people of America. To fright us into ſubmiſſion to their unjuſtifiable claims, they ſent a military force to the town of Boſton. This day leads us to reflect upon the fatal effects of the meaſure! By their intercourſe with troops, made up in general

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of the moſt abandoned of men, the morals of our youth were corrupted: The temples and the day of our God were ſcandalouſly prophaned: We experienced the moſt provoking inſults; and at length ſaw the ſtreets of Boſton ſtrewed with the corpſes of five of its inhabitants, murdered in cool blood, by the Britiſh mercenaries.

THE indignant rage which ſwelled your boſoms upon this occaſion, the fortitude and humanity which you diſcovered, the anguiſh of the friends and relatives of the dead and wounded, with all the horrors of that memorable night, have been painted in vivid colours by an HANCOCK and a WARREN: They have ſhewn the neceſſity of thoſe exertions made by the town, which defeated at that time, the deſigns of the enemies to American liberty, and preſerved us, for the preſent, from the calamities of war.

BUT the paſt year hath preſented us with a Tragedy more ſtriking, becauſe more extenſive, than this: A Tragedy, which more plainly proves the fatal effects of keeping up ſtanding armies in time of peace, than any arguments whatſoever: We have ſeen the ground crimſoned with the gore of hundreds of our fellow-citizens,—we have ſeen the firſt city in America for wealth and extent, depopulated, we have ſeen others deſtroyed, and heard our ſavage enemies breathing out thirſtings for our blood.

FINDING their arts inſufficient to flatter, or their treaſures to bribe the people of America, out of their freedom, the Britiſh government determined, by force, to ſubjugate them to their arbitrary will: In conſequence of this determination, a large party of their troops marched from Boſton, on the morning of the ever memorable nineteenth of April laſt, flushed with the hopes of certain victory,

and defying the armies of the living God, they broke through every divine and political obligation; they wantoned in cruelty; they shed again American blood!

AROUSED by the unprovoked injury, like a lion, awaking from his slumber, we sprang to arms! we felt ourselves inspired with the spirit of our ancestors, we heard our brethrens blood crying to us for vengeance, we rushed into the midst of battle: we compelled our enemies to betake themselves to a disgraceful flight, we pursued them with avidity, and desisted not till they took refuge in that city, of which, by fraud and treachery, they had possessed themselves.

TRUSTING to the divine protection, from that hour we determined never to sheathe the sword, till we had reparation for our injuries, till we had secured our own freedom and the freedom of our posterity: From that hour the den of our enemies hath been surrounded by an American army, *brave and determined*: although they had before boasted of their superiority to all the troops in the world, they have scarcely dared to set their feet out of their strong holds since that time; and instead of ravaging the American Continent in a single campaign, with a single regiment, they have proceeded ——— *one mile and an half* in the conquest of it.

THE heights of Charlestown witnessed to the world, that Americans, fighting in the cause of freedom, were a formidable foe: although they were surrounded by troops, hitherto deemed invincible; although they saw the habitations of their countrymen inveloped with flames; although the cannon roared on every quarter, and they beheld scenes of desolation and bloodshed, to which they were entirely unused, yet they retired not till they had compelled their

enemy

enemy twice to retreat, and had expended the whole of their ammunition: The British forces gained the ground, but they loſt the flower of their army.

FROM one end of the continent to the other, a ſeries of ſucceſſes hath attended the American arms, inſtead of having troops of ſavages poured down to our frontiers, (which the murderous policy of the tyrant of Britain induced him to attempt) we have, through the favour of Heaven, carried our victorious arms into the very bowels of Canada; inſtead of having our ſtores and proviſions cut off by the enemy, we have made important captures from them: Succeſs hath crowned our enterprizes, while diſappointment hath followed thoſe who oppoſe us.

THAT elation of ſpirit, which is excited by our victories, is damped by our feeling the calamities of war. To hear the expiring groans of our beloved countrymen; to behold the flames of our habitations, once the abodes of peace and plenty, aſcending to Heaven, to ſee ruin and deſolation ſpread over our fruitful villages, muſt occaſion ſenſations in the higheſt degree painful.

THIS Day, upon which the gloomy ſcene was firſt opened, calls upon us to mourn for the Heroes who have already died in the bed of honour, fighting for GOD and their country. Eſpecially, does it lead us to recollect the name and the virtues of General WARREN! the kind, the humane, the benevolent friend, in the private walks of life, the inflexible patriot, the undaunted commander in his public ſphere, deſerves to be recollected with gratitude and eſteem!

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This audience, acquainted, in the moſt intimate manner, with his numberleſs virtues, muſt feel his loſs, and bemoan their beloved, their entruſted fellow-citizen! Ah! my countrymen, what tender, what excruciating ſenſations ruſh at once upon our burdened minds, when we recall his lov'd idea! when we reflect upon the manner of his death; when we fancy that we ſee his ſavage enemies exulting o'er his corpſe, beautiful even in death; when we remember that deſtitute of the rites of ſepulture, he was caſt into the ground, without the diſtinction due to his rank and merit; we cannot reſtrain the ſtarting tear, we cannot repreſs the burſting ſigh! We mourn thine exit, illuſtrious ſhade, with undiſſembled grief; we venerate thine exalted character; we will erect a monument to thy memory in each of our grateful breaſts, and to the lateſt ages, will teach our tender infants to liſp the name of WARREN, with veneration and applauſe!

WHEN we traverſe the Canadian wilds, and come to the plains of Abraham, where WOLFE once fell, we are there again compelled to pay a tribute to exalted merit, and to lament the fall of the great MONTGOMERY! Warmed with a ſpirit of patriotiſm, too little felt by his venal countrymen, he eſpouſed the cauſe of American freedom: He left domeſtic eaſe and affluence: He girded on the ſword which he had long laid aſide, and *jeoparded his life on the high places of the field:* Victory followed his ſtandard, ſhe hover'd o'er his head, and crowned it with the laurel wreath: She was juſt ready to hail him the Conqueror of *Canada*, when the fatal ſiſters ſnapped, in a moment the thread of life, and ſeized, from his eager graſp, the untaſted conqueſt! Americans, bear witneſs to his humanity and his valour, for he died fighting in your cauſe, and the cauſe of mankind! let his memory live in your breaſts; let it be handed down to your poſterity, that millions yet unborn may *riſe up and call him bleſſed!*

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THE tender feelings of the human heart are deeply affected with the fate of these and the other heroes who have bled and died, that their country may be free: But at the same time, sensations of indignant wrath, are excited in the breast of every friend to freedom: He will listen to the voice of their blood, which cries aloud to heaven, and to him for vengeance! He will feel himself animated with new vigor in the glorious cause: Nothing daunted by their untimely fate, he will rush into the midst of danger, that he may share their glory, and avenge their death! Every idea which can warm and animate him to glorious deeds, will rush at once upon his mind; and when engaged in the warmest battle, he will hear them, from their heaven, urging him to action: He will feel their spirits transfused into his breast; he will sacrifice whole hecatombs of their murderers to their illustrious *manes!*

INDEED, my countrymen, the people of America have every thing to animate and encourage them in the present contest. Formidable as was once the power of the British Lion, he hath now lost his teeth; universal dissipation hath taken place of that simplicity of manners, and hardiness of integrity, for which the nation was once remarkable: The officers of the British army, instead of inuring themselves to discipline, and seeking for glory in the blood-stained field, wish alone to captivate the softer sex, and triumph over their virtue. The legislature of Great-Britain is totally corrupt; her administration is arbitrary and tyrannical; the people have lost their spirit of resentment; and like the most contemptible of animals, *bow the shoulder to bear and become servants unto tribute.* The national resources are cut off; she is loaded with an intolerable public debt; she is become the scorn of those foreigners, to whom she was once terrible; and it is easy to see that her glory is in the wane.

HOW different from this is the preſent ſtate of our country! Deſcended from a race of hardy anceſtors, who loved their freedom better than they loved their lives; the Americans are jealous of the leaſt infringement of their rights; ſtrangers to that luxury, which effeminates the mind and body; they are capable of enduring incredible hardſhips; with eagerneſs they ruſh into the field of battle, and brave with coolneſs, every danger: They poſſeſs a rich and a fruitful country, ſufficient to ſupply them with every neceſſary and convenience of life; they have inexhauſtible reſources for carrying on war, and bid fair ſoon to be courted for their alliance, by the proudeſt Monarchs of the earth. Their ſtateſmen are equal to the taſk of forming and defending a free and extenſive empire: Their Generals are brave and humane, intrepid and prudent. When I name a WASHINGTON, my audience will feel the juſtice of the remark, and acquit me of the charge of flattery.

POSSESSED of theſe advantages, we ſhould be inexcuſable to God, to our poſterity, to the whole world, if we heſitated, a ſingle moment, in aſſerting our right, and repelling the attacks of lawleſs power. Freedom is offered to us, ſhe invites us to accept her bleſſings; driven from the other regions of the globe, ſhe wiſhes to find an aſylum in the wilds of America; with open arms, let us receive the perſecuted fair, let us imitate the example of our venerable anceſtors, who loved and courted her into theſe deſert climes. With determined bravery, let us reſiſt the attacks of her impudent raviſhers; by reſolution and firmneſs we may defend her from their power, and tranſmit her bleſſings to millions upon millions of our poſterity. Let us then arouſe to arms! For, upon our exertions, under God, depends their freedom, upon our exertions depends the important queſtion, whether the riſing empire of America, ſhall be an empire of ſlaves or of freemen.

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ANIMATED by these considerations, my friends and fellow-citizens, let us strain every nerve in the service of our country! What are our lives, when viewed in competition with the happiness of such an empire! What is our private interest, when opposed to that of three millions of men! Let our bosoms glow with warmth of patriotism; let us sacrifice our ease, our fortunes and our lives, that we may save our country.

THAT a spirit of public virtue may transcend every private consideration, you, the respected inhabitants of the Town of Boston, have plainly manifested: With pleasure you have sacrificed what selfish men hold most dear, to save this oppressed land! With firmness you have resisted every attack of arbitrary power! Like the sturdy oak, you have stood unmoved, and to you, under God, will be owing the salvation of this extensive continent.

WE feel, my beloved friends, our obligations to you! Our hearts confess them; we cordially wish it were in our power to reward you for your patriotism; to restore you to that ease and affluence, of which, for our sakes, you have deprived yourselves; it is not. But our morning and evening petitions to the guardian God of America shall be, that he will bless and reward you.

WITH transport, my countrymen, let us look forward to the bright day, which shall hail us a free and independant state. With earnestness let us implore the forgiveness and the patronage of the Being of all beings, who holds the fate of empires in his hands! With zeal let us exert ourselves in the service of our country, in life; And when the earthly scene shall be closing with us, let us expire with this prayer upon our quivering lips, O GOD, LET AMERICA BE FREE!

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